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A NEW-YEAR'S CALL



NORA PERRY



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“‘HARK, HARK, DEY’S A-SINGIN’!’”

A NEW YEAR'S CALL

BY

NORA PERRY

AUTHOR OF "A ROSEBUD GARDEN OF GIRLS," "A FLOCK OF
GIRLS AND BOYS," "HOPE BENHAM," ETC.

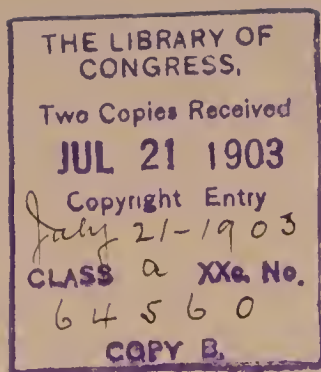
Illustrated

THE NEW YEAR'S CALL

FOR THE YEAR 1881

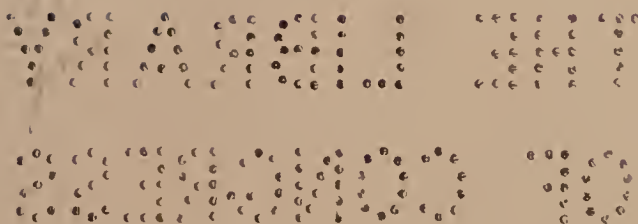
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A NEW-YEAR'S CALL

CHAPTER I



NOW you just wait; they'll come along in a minute or two. Yes, yes; there they are! Look! see!" and Theodora Patterson pulled her sister back to the window with a close little clutch upon the pretty, long, trailing tea-gown, — a clutch that some young ladies would have resented very much. But Eleanor Patterson was a pleasant-tempered young lady, and was besides very fond of her little lame sister; so, with only a mild, remonstrating "Don't, dear!" she gently loosened the hand that pulled her gown awry, and looked out upon the street at the two children who were passing slowly by.

"Are n't they sweet, Eleanor?" asked Theodora, enthusiastically.

"They seem to be nice children," replied Eleanor.

"Nice! Oh, Eleanor!"

Eleanor laughed. She was used to Theo's enthusiasms. Indeed, the whole family were, and they often laughed at the way in which Theo would "go on" over what seemed to them not at all interesting. For several weeks now she had watched the two children she had pointed out to her sister, walking slowly past the house every day in the neighborhood of three o'clock. At first her attention had been directed to the younger of the two, — a rosy, sturdy little fellow in a navy-blue coat, with a big funny fur collar and cap. But when she looked up from the rosy face, she saw another face that pleased her quite as much. It pleased her more and more as she saw it day after day; and when presently the bright dark eyes caught her glance and returned it, and a pair of sweet red lips smiled upon her, she felt as if she had indeed made a very desirable acquaintance. Grown-up Eleanor, however, saw this exchange of glances and smiles between the two girls, and thought to herself, —

"Well, this is going rather too far. It's all very well for poor little Theo to amuse herself

by watching people pass by; but it won't do for her to get familiar with them like this, for there 's no knowing where she 'll stop. She 's such a soft-hearted little thing, she never sees the difference in people; all her geese are swans."

Something of this Eleanor tried to convey to Theo. Theo, however, did not seem to understand. In fact, she was so taken up with her new acquaintances that she scarcely heard Eleanor's hints and suggestions. Eleanor saw that she did not, and concluded to lay the case before her mother.

"But the child is always amusing herself like that," said Mrs. Patterson, after she had heard the story.

"Yes, she is always watching the people in the street, and weaving little romances about them; but she usually changes from one to another. This has been going on for weeks, — this particular fancy, — and it has progressed into quite a familiar acquaintanceship; and when she is wheeled out in her carriage she is likely to meet the children and make further acquaintance with them; and we don't know anything about them or whose children they are."

"No; that is true. What sort of children do they seem to be?" asked Mrs. Patterson.

"They are nice enough in one way, but I don't think they are children she would be likely to meet."

"Yes; I see. But — but Theo's life is so different from that of most children."

"Yes; but she is growing stronger, and will take her place by and by, perhaps, with other young girls of her — class." Eleanor was going to say "set." She changed it to "class," because "set" sounded narrow and snobbish, and Eleanor did not want to be either narrow or snobbish.

A few minutes before three o'clock the next afternoon, Mrs. Patterson, going into the front drawing-room, saw Theo sitting in a big chair, close up to the window, watching and waiting. She heard her mother's step, and turned to her with a smile, exclaiming eagerly, —

"Oh, Mamma, you're just in time!"

"In time for what, dear?"

"To see my new friends. Eleanor saw them yesterday. Did she tell you? Such a dear, bright-looking girl, and such a cunning little brother! And I think, Mamma, that the nurse-girl is sick or gone away, for every day the sister herself takes her little brother to walk; there is never any nurse-girl with them."



“OH, MAMMA, YOU’RE JUST IN TIME!”

“Perhaps *she* is the nurse-maid, and not, as you think, the child’s sister.”

“What! *my* girl? Oh, Mamma, when you see her — But there she is now. Look! look!”

And Mamma looked, and saw a slim, growing-up girl about the age of her Theo, but, unlike Theo, straight and strong and ruddy with health. She was comfortably yet rather oddly dressed in a dark green suit, with a little red cloth cap on her head. She was answering some question of the child’s at the moment Mrs. Patterson observed her, but her eyes were turned expectantly to the window; and the instant she caught sight of Theo, there came a smile and nod, to which Theo delightedly responded. The child, too, glanced up just then, and showed all his pretty baby teeth as he bobbed his curly head up and down.

“Oh, Mamma, are n’t they dears? and oh! oh! may n’t I open the window and ask them to come in? Oh, Mamma, *you* do it for me. Quick! quick! for I don’t know their names, and we can’t call after them.”

“My dear child — ”

“Oh, Mamma, hurry! they’re going out of sight.”

"Theo, dear, we don't know them at all; they are strangers. What would they think?" This last question seemed the best argument, Mrs. Patterson thought, to reconcile Theo to not carrying out her proposition.

"Oh, Mamma, they would think just as I do, — that we 've got over being strangers, and are ready to be friends."

"But, my dear, it would n't be proper. People don't rush forward like that without knowing anything about each other."

The tears came into Theo's eyes. She turned a straining, wistful gaze down the street where her unknown acquaintances were slowly disappearing from her view.

"I am so sorry, dearie, to disappoint you; but I really could n't allow you to make acquaintances like that. We have to know something about people before we invite them to visit us."

Mrs. Patterson, as she spoke, put her arm around Theo, and drew her gently toward her. Theo made no reply to her mother's words, and offered no remonstrance; but after a few minutes she asked, "Mamma, do you remember one day last winter when you took me to the *matinée* to see 'Little Lord Fauntleroy'?"

"Yes, my dear, I remember it very well," replied Mrs. Patterson.

"Well, and do you remember the children that sat in front of us, — two girls, — one of my age and one younger?"

"Yes."

"And do you remember that you — you took a fancy to those children, just as I have to these, and when we went out, and it rained, you asked them to come with us in the carriage, and the maid that was with them thanked you, and said that *their* carriage was to be sent, and they were to wait for it. Weren't they strangers, Mamma, just like my girl and her brother?"

"Y-es, they were strangers, but there was a difference. I — I saw at once that these children were — well, that they belonged to people that — that moved in the — best society."

"What is 'best society,' Mamma?"

"Oh, the people who come of the best families, — who are refined and cultivated."

"And rich, Mamma?"

"No, oh, no! they are not always rich."

"But, Mamma, there's Miss Morton, who teaches me. She is refined and cultivated. Is she in the best society?"

"Miss Morton is a very nice person, of course, but she is n't exactly in society."

"Does n't she come of one of the best families?"

"Well, she is from a very good family, I believe, — very respectable people."

"Did we come of one of the best families?"

Mrs. Patterson flushed. "Your Grandfather Lester was an able lawyer, and your Grandfather Patterson was a successful merchant."

"Yes, I know about Grandpa Patterson. I've heard Papa tell how he made his fortune, and climbed up from the place of errand-boy to the position of head of the firm."

There was a few minutes' pause after this; then suddenly Theo began again: "Mamma, what was it you saw or what was it you did n't see in *my* friends that was so different from those girls at the *matinée*?"

"I don't know that I can explain it to you, my dear, but there was something. Those little girls at the *matinée* had an unmistakable air of high breeding and careful training, and — style. *Your* little girl and boy looked — well, as if they belonged to a different class of people; not as if they were cared *for*, but as if they were used to caring for themselves."

Theo lifted her head with a quick movement. "Mamma, perhaps their father now is just as Grandpa Patterson was once, when he was young, — climbing up; and as Grandpa was, he has n't got to the top, and can't give his children much care."

Mrs. Patterson flushed again. Theo did say such queer things. "If it was not Theo, I should think it was sly and impertinent," the mother said once to her eldest daughter. But slyness and impertinence were out of the question where Theo was concerned. She was as open as the day, and innocent and inexperienced.

Before the flush had passed from Mrs. Patterson's cheeks, the innocent tongue resumed the subject once more.

"But, Mamma dear, I did n't care for those girls as you did. I did n't think they looked interesting, and I *do* think my girl and boy are interesting." Another little pause, then: "Oh, dear! I don't believe I like 'best society,' because it seems to me it leaves out almost all the interesting people! I suppose it left out Grandpa until he had climbed 'way up, and then he was all ready to go to heaven; and what would he care for 'best society' that was picked out by people here, when he could

have the best that God had picked out in heaven?"

"Theo dear, look, it is beginning to snow," exclaimed Mrs. Patterson, suddenly. "By to-morrow, it may be, we shall have a sleigh-ride." She did not try to reply to her little daughter's last remark. "And what *could* I say?" she asked Eleanor, when, later, she repeated the conversation to her. Eleanor laughed, and declared that Theo was not to be managed by argument, for she always got the best of it there.

"But what shall I say to her to-morrow, Eleanor, for she won't give it up like this? She 'll look for those interesting children of hers just the same to-morrow afternoon."

Eleanor laughed again. "Oh, leave it to me, Mamma. You have n't the least invention. I 'll manage." And Eleanor, who had a great deal of invention, did manage, her mother thought, beautifully. For she kept Theo amused at matinées and cycloramas and sleigh-rides until the end of the week. But oh, how tired poor Theo was on Saturday night! — so tired that on Sunday morning she did n't want to get up from her little white bed; so tired that she had to rest there not only on Sunday,

but on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday, and the doctor who came to see her said that it might be many days before she would be rested enough to leave it. Poor Mrs. Patterson, — she did n't admire Eleanor's invention so much now; and Eleanor herself felt disturbed and worried at the result of her plans, though, as she assured her mother, she and 'Lisa, the maid, had been very careful of Theo.

In these quiet days in bed Theo thought a great deal, and not the least of these thoughts was about her two street friends. Where were they? she wondered. Did they still walk by the window every pleasant day at three o'clock? and had they walked there and missed her all these days that she had been in bed? She said nothing of this to her mother or Eleanor, and they fancied she had forgotten. If they could have looked into her mind they would have seen that she was far from forgetting these "friends" of hers, even at Christmas, when her room was adorned with flowers and evergreens, and all sorts of lovely gifts were brought to her.

Her mother, who noticed this wistful expression, said to her consolingly, "You are thinking it is hard to lie in bed on Christmas Day, dearie, I know; but the doctor says that in a

week more you will be up, and a week will bring the new year. Perhaps on New-Year's Day you can hold a little reception."

"Y-es," answered Theo, rather doubtfully.

"You don't like it, do you, dear? Well, then, we won't have it. I only wanted to give you pleasure."

"Yes, Mamma; but, you see, I don't know many people — young people — girls and boys. They would be the children of your friends, and they would n't care much for me, for I've not seen many of them; and I — well, I should n't care at all for them. If they knew me and liked me, and came, not just because they were invited, but because they wanted to see me, that would be nice."

Mrs. Patterson bent down and kissed the pale little face. "Is there *anything*, Theo, that you would like for New-Year's Day?" she asked.

For a moment Theo hesitated; then she said quietly, "No, Mamma."

In that moment of hesitation she had thought of her little friends, — if she could watch for them at the parlor window and invite them in. But then she recalled her mother's words of a week ago. If consent were given now it would

be because of her illness. There would be no real welcome for her guests, and that would rob the visit of its pleasure. At the hesitation, at the sound of the "No, Mamma," Mrs. Patterson turned again and asked, "Theo, are you sure there is nothing?"

The "No, Mamma," was more decided this time; but Mrs. Patterson wondered what it was that Theo would n't say.

CHAPTER II

"I SHALL be back in a fortnight, Jessie."

"Yes, Papa."

"And you 'll be very careful of yourself and Bertie while I 'm gone?"

"Yes, Papa."

"Well, good-by, my dear. Good-by, Bertie, my boy," and Mr. Hamlin kissed first one and then the other of his children, lifting rosy, sturdy little Bertie for the last kiss, and a last injunction to take care of his sister.

"Yes, I take care her. I kill all 'e bugglers that come," answered Bertie, doubling up his small fat fists.

"What in the world does he mean?" asked the father.

"Bugglers — bugglers — bad bugglers that come in 'e night and 'teal! dat's what I mean!" cried Bertie, rather indignant at his father for not understanding him.

"He means burglars," laughed Jessie.

"Where did he hear anything of that kind?" asked Mr. Hamlin, frowning.

"I suppose he heard Ann talking about the robbery at Mr. Norton's last week," answered Jessie.

"'Es, 'es, robbers — bugglers — 'tole evwy-t'ing, and f'ightened 'ittle Tommy 'mos' to def. Bertie won't be f'ightened at bugglers nor anysing. Bertie take his new gun and kill 'em!" and with this savage threat the boy laughed so gleefully that the father joined in the laugh, thinking that not much harm had come of Irish Ann's talk, after all, if his small son had caught such joyful, if sanguinary, inspiration from it; and so it was in a gayer mood altogether that he kissed him again, and said, —

"No; Bertie won't be frightened at anything, whatever happens, for Bertie is Papa's big brave boy."

The Hamlins lived in a little flat at the top of a high apartment-house. The family con-

sisted of Mr. Hamlin, Jessie, Bertie, and Ann McMullen, the maid-of-all-work. When Mrs. Hamlin died, two years ago, Bertie was a year old. And until within a few months there had been a nurse-maid for him; but when one day the maid was taken sick, and had to go away, they found that they could do very well without her, for Jessie was a bright, energetic girl, with a good deal of careful womanliness, and Ann, who had been with the family since Jessie's birth, and much attached to them all, was quite willing to look out for the boy when Jessie was away. This arrangement saved Mr. Hamlin not a little, which was a great consideration, for he was only a clerk, and his salary by no means large. Thirteen-year-old Jessie had been her father's companion so much that he talked very freely with her; and she understood perfectly the necessity for economy, and had in consequence become quite a clever little manager in many ways. But notwithstanding this rather premature shouldering of cares, the girl was a real girl, bright and joyous and full of the spirits of health and youth. Perhaps it was for these very reasons of youth and health, united with the womanliness developed by circumstances, that she got on so

nicely with her little brother; for while the womanly side of her kept her from spoiling him, her fund of spirits brought them together in the happiest sort of way.

"We are two chums, are n't we?" she said, laughingly, to the little fellow one day.

The term seemed to please the boy mightily, and from that time he would every now and then say to people, or to his sister herself, "Dessie and Bertie two chums."

That night after his father had gone, and his sister was sitting by his crib singing his favorite song, —

"Three blind mice,
See how they run!" —

the little voice suddenly piped out, with sly drollery, —

"Two bwave chums,
See how they wun!"

Jessie pounced down upon the roguish youngster with a kiss and a laugh, followed by the words, —

"Two brave chums,
See how they sleep!"

you'd better say, sir;" and then ensued a frolic, which ended in a gradual closing of the

sleepy eyes, and a gradual subsiding of the little voice.

They had had an early tea that night on account of Mr. Hamlin's departure, and by six o'clock Ann McMullen had cleared everything away, and betaken herself to the other end of the city to see a sick cousin.

"I'll be back by nine o'clock sure, Miss Jessie, and perhaps before," she said to the young housekeeper; and Jessie had assured her that that was quite time enough, for she had her French lesson to study, and should n't think of going to bed until half-past nine. The French lesson was a very interesting story of the French Revolution. It was so interesting that Jessie presently forgets everything else. She forgets so entirely that she is only roused by the tears in her eyes, and the tears have got into her throat, that smarts and stings. Oh, *how* it smarts and stings! and what — what is this, — this strange atmosphere? With a sudden cry the girl leaps to her feet and flings down her book. Then for a second she stands petrified with a terrible fear. In the next instant she runs with flying steps to the door that leads into the common hall, and throws it open to see, to know that the strange atmos-

phere is a curling cloud of smoke; that the house is on fire! With a life-saving instinct she shuts the door, and running to the little crib in the bedroom, seizes the sleeper in her arms.

“Bertie, Bertie, wake up! wake up!”

Bertie opens his eyes, only to close them again with the weight of baby slumber.

“Oh, Bertie, Bertie, wake up! — wake up, and come with sister!”

At the sharp agonized tone and the unaccustomed rough handling, for Jessie is shaking the child wildly, he lifts his head and again opens his eyes.

“Come! come! get up, Bertie! We must run fast for our lives.”

“Two bwave chums,
See — how — they wun,”

the boy murmurs. But Jessie's next call to him is in a breaking sob, and Bertie, now more thoroughly awake, starts up with, “Is it the bugglers? Don't ky; I take care oo. I kill 'em wiz my gun. Quick! quick! Dessie, get my gun!”

“No, no; it's not burglars. The house is on fire; and Bertie must be brave, and come with me on to the roof. Papa has told me often if

there was a fire to go to the roof. Here! quick! put your feet into these overshoes, and here is your fur coat. No! no! there's no time for anything else. Now give me your hand, and — and don't be frightened at the smoke. We'll soon be out of it, — on the roof, you know."

The next moment, as the blinding column of smoke meets them, he gives a sharp cry; but as he feels his sister's arms about him, a sense of security takes possession of him, even though he is half strangling and suffocating in his efforts to breathe. Up, up the steep stairs the girl presses with her burden. Once or twice she stumbles and nearly falls, but she gains her feet again. Every step is a flight and a fight for life, and every step is winged with fear, for behind her the pursuing smoke gathers power, and volume, and from below an ominous, hissing, crackling sound makes itself heard with terrible distinctness. The stairs are not many, but they are irregular and winding; for the house is an old-fashioned residence remodelled into an apartment-house. The passage is also narrow and partly shut in, and it is not until almost at the very top that the free breath of heaven is felt. Thus blindly groping her way along the winding turns, it seemed to poor Jessie

that she should never reach the end. The swift-flying moments were like lagging hours; and the last few steps, blindly taken, brought a despairing cry to her lips. And then it was that another step, another turn, and suddenly full in her face she felt the night wind blow, and her heart leaped up with one great throb of relief. They were safe, for one more step and they were on the roof. The fresh air aroused Bertie, and brought back something of his confidence, so that he was quite willing to be set upon his feet, and take his sister's hand. As he did so he glanced up at the broad expanse of sky, which at the height he stood appeared to him very near, and he said to his sister, in a cheerful little voice, —

“Dessie, are we doin’ up to heaven?”

Jessie did not answer, for just then a burst of smoke at the stairway opening they had left, warned her to hasten from a double danger; for she had heard and read enough of fires to know that the fireman's hose might presently not only drench but beat them down.

Easy enough in that first moment of relief as her future progress seemed, it was not long before the height and solitariness, the strangeness of the whole situation, began to oppress

her with doubt and question. Why did she not meet others who had fled to the house-top as she had for safety? Almost as she asked herself this question there flashed into her mind two facts that she had forgotten. Their neighbors who occupied the rest of the upper floor were absent, and the floor below had an escape directly communicating from the hall-way to the lower roof of another block extending in the opposite direction, — westward, instead of eastward. These were, indeed, appalling facts to a girl of thirteen, wise and womanly as she was in many things, and accustomed to facing difficulties. What should she do? She could not turn back, that was certain; and if she kept on, what then? In the other direction numbers of persons no doubt were in force together. They would make themselves heard. They were very likely from the first observed and even assisted by the firemen, for she recollected now that the escape was said to be broad and easy from that lower floor. But who would assist her? How should she make herself heard? All the time that these questions were agitating her mind, she was slowly and carefully going forward, leading Bertie by the hand. The little fellow had accepted the situa-

tion at first with the healthy composure that was luckily a part of his character. He had too, at the first, been rather pleased, though a little awed, at the novelty of walking on the house-tops, — “so near heaven,” as he put it. But mild as the night was, it was a winter night, and he presently began to feel the frosty air, for his sister had had only time to slip his feet into a pair of wool-lined overshoes, and to put over his little trouser night-gown the new white fur coat that had been one of his Christmas presents. But he had none of his usual warm under-clothing, no stout leggings or stockings, and his head was quite uncovered.

“Bertie’s cold,” he said at last.

“Yes, sister knows; but Bertie must be brave. Two brave chums, you know,” the poor girl cried, as cheerfully as she could.

The boy did n’t take up the refrain. His little cold fingers closed more tightly about his sister’s, and presently he asked, in a tearful voice, “Why don’t we get dare?”

“Get where?” inquired Jessie, trying to speak lightly.

“To heaven. Can’t oo find er stairs?”

Jessie shuddered. Oh, what if — A sob rose in her throat at the thought that was sug-

gested to her. What, what should she do? Could her voice be heard if she cried out at such a height? She stopped and looked backward. She could see a thin stream of water forcing down a little cloud of smoke, but no sight, as she had hoped, of a human being, — no fireman or workman of any kind. It did not occur to her that the wind was blowing from the east, driving the smoke westward, and that every one's energies were employed in that direction. What *could* she do? At this crisis Bertie's voice arose in a pitiful wail, and stooping, she lifted him in her arms. As his soft, cold cheek touched her own, the sob in her throat broke its bonds. The child looked up in amazement. What! his Dessie crying! This was an unexampled thing, and for a moment he did not know how to take it. Then the noble little soul forgot his own discomfort, his own terrors, in his love and pity, and straightening up, he put his arms about his Dessie's neck, and said to her, —

“Don't ky; Bertie take care Dessie.” A resounding kiss sealed this promise. Under the influence of words and kiss Jessie's heart entirely overflowed, and the tears she had restrained burst forth. At sight of these tears

Bertie struggled down upon his feet, and caught her hand, crying, "Come, come with Bertie!" And half mechanically she again went forward, almost led by the small, tight-clinging hand. It was only a few moments after that she was startled by a sudden, shrill cry from the boy, "Hark! Hark! dey's a-singin'! Bertie's foun' er stairs!"

Yes; the child was right. There was certainly a sound of singing somewhere not far away. Where? What could it be? Following the sound, a few steps led them around a tall chimney, and there Jessie saw before her a glimmering of light. A step or two farther showed her whence it came, and from whence, also, came the sound of singing. The skylight window of a roof had been flung back, and from the hall-way just below, the bright radiance from a gas jet streamed up and out, and from some lower floor floated up to them the gay little holiday carol:—

“Run, run, run,
Before the sun
Can catch us here,
Can snatch us here,
And meet the year,—
The young new year.
Run, run, run,
Before the sun.”

The two children had flung themselves down at once by the open skylight; and Bertie, peeping over, laughed aloud as he listened. Then catching the words, —

“Run, run, run,”

at the end, he laughed again, and suddenly sang out, lustily, —

“Two bwave chums,
See how they wun!”

A house-maid coming up the stairs into the hall just below, stopped, startled at this unexpected sound. Where in the world could it be? Bertie saw the startled look with delight, and straightway sang the couplet again. The girl lifted her head, and caught sight of the childish face framed by the short rings of golden hair, which the gas-light illuminated into something seraphic. For a moment she held her breath in awe-struck amazement; then she exclaimed, “It’s a little angel, sure!”

“No, ’tain’t; it’s Bertie,” the boy cried, impatient now to be taken down into the warmth and shelter of a home, — “it’s Bertie and Dessie too. We’ve wunned away from the fire. Tum, tum up and help us down; we’re f’eezin’.”

Jessie, now leaning forward, joined in the explanation, and made the matter clearer to the girl, whose astonishment broke out in loud exclamations. "What is it? What's the matter, Jane?" a voice inquired.

"Matter! Look here, sir! Did you ever know the like of this?" and Jane turned to the master of the house, who overheard her wondering cries.

The master of the house was almost as much astonished when he saw the children's faces, and heard the explanation of their presence, as the maid had been; but his astonishment did not interfere with his action as it did with hers, for immediately upon comprehending the case, he sprang up the steps, and lifted Bertie in his arms, at the same time telling Jane to bring the little girl along. Into a luxurious room, full of warmth and soft shaded light, the children were taken, greatly to the surprise of the occupants, — a group of four or five persons who were at the moment engaged in animated conversation. But the conversation ceased at the sight of the new-comers. Bertie, in his white coat, with its fringes of snowy Astrachan, was a charming object. His eyes were now shining like stars, his cheeks flushed, and



“OH, MAMMA! OH, ELEANOR! THEY ARE MY FRIENDS!”

the ruffled yellow curls made a sort of golden halo around his face.

“And you came alone all this way, — you two on the tops of the houses? Oh, it makes me dizzy!” cried a tall young lady who had taken Jessie’s cold hand, and was drawing her to the open grate fire. With this movement, Jessie was brought forward into the light; and as she lifted her head a little soft shout arose from a shaded corner, and then out of the corner, limping on a small crutch, came hurrying a slender sprite of a girl, crying, —

“Oh, Mamma! oh, Eleanor! they are my friends! — my friends that I used to watch at the window for! Don’t you see? I didn’t know the little boy at first in his white coat. But they are my friends — my friends — and oh, my New-Year’s callers!”

“What does she mean?” asked Mr. Patterson, in a low voice, of his wife; and Mrs. Patterson explained.

“But is n’t it wonderful,” cried Theodora, as she clung to Jessie, “that you should come down to me like this instead of in at the door, and on New-Year’s night, too? It’s like a gift from Heaven.”

Neither Mrs. Patterson nor Eleanor thought

of restraining Theodora's enthusiasm at this moment. They were touched and moved out of all petty considerations for that moment, and moved also with not a little admiration, as Jessie simply and modestly told the story of her escape. In this story her hearers learned something of the life of the family, — the limited means, the father's love and care, and his young daughter's efficiency. But Mr. Patterson discovered something more than these facts, as he questioned the daughter about her father, — his name and occupation, etc., — with a view to communicating with him as soon as possible, and thus saving him from unnecessary anxiety in regard to his children's welfare. What this "something more" was did not, however, transpire until later, for Mr. Patterson was a man of few words; but his wife, who noted the look of deeper interest that suddenly came into her husband's face as Jessie answered one of his questions, said to herself, "I think very likely this Henry Hamlin was once a clerk of Patterson & Co." She was almost certain of this presently, and was quite assured of it when he bade the children good-night, and bending to kiss the slumbering Bertie, said, "Well, we must take good care of these little Hamlins."

And very good care indeed was taken of them. Mr. Patterson was full of kindness and consideration. He got from Gregerson & Co. — the firm that employed Mr. Hamlin — all the points at which he would be likely to stop on his Western trip, and telegraphed to every point of the safety of the children. And so the days went by, — happy days for Theodora, and happy days for Jessie and Bertie, though a little thread of anxiety ran through Jessie's enjoyment, until Papa was heard from. After that her heart was easier; and when Papa himself followed his messages, her joy was complete. "Though everything is burned up, Papa — everything but Bertie and me," she said pathetically.

"' But Bertie and me ' ? " repeated Mr. Hamlin, betwixt smiles and tears, as he thought how "Bertie and me " made the whole world a treasure-house to him.

"And Bertie took care Dessie. Dessie ky, and Bertie foun' er stairs for her," exclaimed the boy, in a triumphant tone. And then over again Jessie had to tell the story of that wonderful walk across the roofs.

It was that night after Mr. Hamlin's return that Eleanor, finding her father alone, said to

him, "Mr. Hamlin is quite a gentlemanly person, is n't he, Papa?"

"Oh, quite so," answered Mr. Patterson, absently, turning his newspaper to the light.

"And Jessie seems a nice girl, — well taught and quite well brought up."

"Yes."

"Papa, I want you to listen to me a few moments."

Mr. Patterson laid down his newspaper with some surprise. "Yes, my dear; what is it?"

"Mamma and I have a little plan. Theodora has taken a great fancy to Jessie, and the girl is very good to her, and we — Mamma and I — have wondered whether it would n't be a good thing all round to engage Jessie, if we could, for a sort of young companion for Theodora, to read to her and help her with her studies. We thought it would be an assistance to Mr. Hamlin too, for Mamma says his losses must come rather hard upon him. Then another thing, Papa; it would perhaps save embarrassment in the future by putting matters at once into their proper relations."

"Proper relations? What do you mean?"

"Well, you know what Theodora is, — her enthusiasms. She is ready to make friends

with anybody she fancies. She has no idea whatever of the world and its social relations, and by and by, when she grows up and gets stronger, she will take such a different place in society from this young girl, that — that — ” The tall, beautiful Eleanor stopped, stammering at something she saw in her father's expression. When this expression merged into a sarcastic laugh, a bright red blush mounted to the young lady's face. “But, Papa,” she began again, deprecatingly.

“But, my dear,” he interrupted, “Theodora's unworldly instincts, her — you must excuse me — finer tastes, have served her better than your worldly ones. You said that Mr. Hamlin was quite a gentlemanly person; he ought to be, if a fine education and early advantages mean anything, for Henry Hamlin is the grandson of Anthony Hamlin, who started and *made* the great firm of Gregerson & Co. It used to be Hamlin & Gregerson. When Anthony Hamlin died he left a million or more to his only son. This son, the father of Henry, sold out his interest in the firm, and went abroad to live. When *he* died, it was found that extravagance and bad management had reduced the big fortune to a pittance; and thus thrown on their

own resources, his sons had to go to work, — to begin at the bottom of the ladder, as their grandfather had done; but I'm afraid without his shrewdness."

A flash of memory, and there came into Eleanor's mind Theodora's words that her mother had repeated to her, "Perhaps, their father now is just as Grandpa Patterson was once, — he has n't got to the top, and can't give his children much care."

The color deepened in Eleanor's cheeks at her father's next words, "You say that Theodora has no idea of the world and its social relations. I am very glad that she has n't your idea. It is a poor idea anywhere; but it's a very silly idea in this country, where such class distinctions are at variance with the very structure of the government, instead of being upheld by it, as in the older countries. Why, my child, America is a country that is built up in every particular, socially as well as in other ways, by work, — the successful work of brains and business enterprise, and to ignore this is simply ridiculous; and for you, whose father happens to be prosperous to-day on the foundation that *his* father laid from a very small beginning, to set yourself — "

“But, Papa, Papa, I see now that I’ve made a great mistake; what you’ve told me alters the case. If I had known, of course, that Mr. Hamlin — ”

“If you had known that Mr. Hamlin was the grandson of Anthony Hamlin! Oh, Eleanor, I want you to cultivate something of that spirit that Theodora has, which you call unworldliness, and *I* call perception, that will enable you to see for yourself what people are, in spite of mere external circumstances. It seems, — well, it seems to me, my dear, vulgar in you not to be able to do so.”

The tears were in Eleanor’s eyes and in her throat, and her cheeks were burning red by this time. She began to speak, “Papa, I did n’t mean — ” and then her voice broke, and the next moment she was kneeling beside her father’s chair, and his arm was around her, and her head upon his shoulder.

“I know, my dear, you did n’t mean to be, for you did n’t think you could be, vulgarly worldly. But, Eleanor, it is your great fault, and — I must say it — it keeps you from being quite a lady.”

“Oh, Papa!”

“Yes, my dear; but don’t cry over it. Do

something better. Try to see things differently. Start with the New Year, and with Theodora's New-Year's callers for hint and suggestion. To think "—and Mr. Patterson's voice took on a lighter tone — "that a bright girl like you could have made such a mistake, — could have thought for a moment that these Hamlins were of an inferior position because they lived out of *your* world, and that you could engage Henry Hamlin's young daughter at so much per week to coach Theodora in her studies. Oh, Eleanor!"



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